

# The Whole Dog Journal

## Canned Food Review 2014

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### Here's what to look for and what to look out for – but you have to pick which is best for your dog.

By [Nancy Kerns \(/db/fdc.collector?client\\_id=wholedogjournal&form\\_id=maileditform&link\\_id=20\)](#)

How do you choose a canned food for your dog? It probably depends on why you want to feed him a wet food – and it may even depend on how big he is or how old he is. Are you trying to build or rebuild a dog's health or help a starved dog gain weight? Tempt the appetite of a sick, depressed, (or just fussy) dog? Prevent further health problems in a dog with diabetes or kidney disease? Does your dog weigh two pounds, 20 pounds, or 120 pounds? Is she two months old, two years old, or 20 years old? The answers you give will undoubtedly affect your choice, because top-quality canned dog food is extremely expensive.

When you think about it, good foods have to be expensive. This is chiefly because top-quality ingredients like real, fresh meats from named species – one of the main draws of canned foods – cost more than lower-quality rendered meat meals, meat by-products, and plant proteins. Percentage-wise, top-quality wet foods also contain more meat than dry foods – and that's another reason to feed them, especially to dogs whose health is precarious.

Most pet food companies formulate their products according to the price they regard as viable – what their experience has led them to believe is the most dog owners will pay. This is why the vast majority of canned dog foods on the market contain things like meat by-products, grains (or grain by-products), and/or any carbohydrate sources at all!

But the companies that make canned dog foods that are truly top-quality, with wholesome meats and precious few non-meat ingredients, are not making anything close to the majority of the foods on the market. They formulate and manufacture products for an elite, informed minority of pet owners who will pay a premium price for the best canned foods available.

But when you start examining good canned dog foods on the market in order to sort and rank them according to quality, you will notice that there is a broad range of quality even within this very narrow segment of the pet food market. It's sort of like splitting molecules: as you discover smaller and smaller particles, the wider and wider the spaces between the particles appear. How do you compare products that contain far superior meat sources with products containing higher percentages of lower-quality meat? Is a product that contains whole organic chickpeas better or worse than one that contains a much smaller amount of a vegetable by-product, like tomato pomace?

#### What's Your Motivation?

Again, the answer is that it depends. The first task is to determine whether the product you are considering for your dog is properly qualified as a "top-quality" food. Then you have to look for the features that have motivated you to spend more than the average dog owner on canned food, and weigh them against the product's weaknesses. What is most important to you: the amount of animal protein in the food? The type and

quality of fat used in the formula? Organic or non-GMO ingredients? Domestically sourced ingredients? Are you looking for a grain-free, gluten-free, or carb-free food – and do you know the difference?(Many grain- and gluten-free foods do contain other carbohydrate sources, such as potatoes, sweet potatoes, pumpkin, peas, or chickpeas.)

What about the fat content? The less carbohydrate content in a canned food, the higher its fat content tends to be. Is your dog a slender agility superstar, apt to lose 10 percent of his body weight over a weekend trial, who would benefit from a high-fat food? Or is he a senior couch potato with limited mobility, who needs a reduced-fat formula?

Same goes for protein. Depending on your dog, higher amounts of protein can be a good or a bad thing.

What about moisture? Are you looking for a stew-like product with 85 percent moisture, to increase your dog's hydration? Or is the average amount of moisture (78 percent) in a meatloaf-style food plenty for your dog?

Below is our list of selection criteria – hallmarks of quality – that you can use to identify whether the product you are considering is in the “premium” strata of the market. We also list some deal-killers – traits that eliminate products from our consideration. And starting on the facing page is a list of companies (listed alphabetically, not ranked) that make canned foods that possess all the requisite hallmarks of quality and that have no disqualifying characteristics. Your priorities for your dog – and your budget! – will have to determine which of these WDJ-approved foods is “best” for you and your dog.

You can do this! Just read the labels!

## Related Files

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- [WDJ's Approved Canned Foods List Page 1 \(WDJNOV14.P05.php\)](#)
- [WDJ's Approved Canned Foods List Page 2 \(WDJNOV14.P06.php\)](#)
- [WDJ's Approved Canned Foods List Page 3 \(WDJNOV14.P07.php\)](#)

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- [Dog Food \(Canned\) \(/topics/canned\\_dog\\_food.html\)](#)
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### NEWMAN'S OWN ORGANICS

Aptos, CA; (800) 865-2866; newmansownorganics.com

Newman's Own offers 11 varieties that contain organic meats, including 7 grain-free.

### PARTY ANIMAL

West Hollywood, CA; (855) 727-8926  
partyanimalpetfood.com

Party Animal has two lines: **Cocolicious** (6 grain-free varieties, each containing organic coconut oil, including 3 that contain organic meats); and **Party Animal** (10 varieties, including 6 organic and 8 grain-free).

### PETCUREAN PET NUTRITION

Abbotsford, BC, Canada; (866) 864-6112; petcurean.com

Petcurean has one line of canned food: **Go!** (7 varieties, including 2 grain-free)

### PETGUARD

Green Cove Springs, FL; (800) 874-3221; petguard.com

Petguard offers 13 varieties, including 2 organic.

### PET - TAO

Fairview, TN; (615) 934-3832; pettao.com

Pet-Tao offers 4 varieties.

### PETROPICS

Sequim, WA; (360) 797-1421; petropics.com

Petropics has one line, **Tiki Dog**, with 10 varieties.

### SOLID GOLD HEALTH PRODUCTS FOR PETS

El Cajon, CA; (800) 364-4863; solidgoldhealth.com

Solid Gold offers 5 varieties, including 2 grain- and gluten-free.

### SPRING NATURALS

Mitchell, SD; (866) 868-0874; springnaturals.com

Spring Naturals offers 11 products, 4 with whole grains and 7 grain-free varieties.

### THREE DOG BAKERY

Kansas City, MO; (800) 487-3287  
threedog.com

Three Dog Bakery has 4 varieties of "Gracie's Gourmet" food (in pouches).



### VERUS PET FOODS

Abingdon, MD; (888) 828-3787; veruspetfoods.com

Verus has 11 varieties, including 4 new varieties utilizing Green Lipped Mussel.

### VET'S CHOICE

Melville, NY; (800) 992-9738; vetschoice.com

Vet's Choice has 5 Holistic Health Extension varieties, including 2 grain-free; 2 are for supplemental feeding only.

### WELLPET

Tewksbury, MA; (800) 225-0904; wellpet.com

Wellpet has three lines: Wellness, Eagle Pack, and Holistic Select. The **Wellness** line itself is large, comprised of 8 "Complete Health" varieties; 6 "chunks and gravy" stews; 6 grain-free "Core" varieties; 4 "Simple" (limited ingredient) varieties (including 2 grain-free); 8 new grain-free "Petite Entrees" (for small dogs, packed in small plastic tubs); and 5 "mixers and toppers," 95%-meat products meant for supplemental or intermittent feeding.

Wellpet's **Eagle Pack** line has 4 varieties; the **Holistic Select** line was recently reformulated, and offers 6 grain-free varieties.

### WERUVA

Natick, MA; (800) 776-5262; weruva.com

Weruva has 17 varieties of grain-free "stews." These products are made in Thailand.

### WHOLE EARTH FARMS

Amarillo, TX; (800) 323-3353; feelgoodness.com

Merrick Pet Care's third line, Whole Earth Farms, is positioned as its "affordable" line; even so, the company says its products contain no ingredients from China. The line has 7 grain-free varieties.